

From Ancient Gymnastics to Online Fitness Training – Evolution and Perspectives in Physical Training

Gheorghe Braniște

Dunarea de Jos University of Galati, Romania, State University of Physical Education and Sports, Kishinev, Republic of Moldova  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1995-2442>

Abstract: All the Olympic Movement activities have been set to promote sport, culture and education, drawing inspiration from the physical training practiced by the ancient civilizations in the **Middle East and Asia**. **From the very first evidence of men's interest in training the body through disciplined exercises, 7000 years ago, the spread of sport was meant to cultivate** the joy found in effort, the educational value of good example and respect for universal fundamental ethical principles. The present study analyzes the alternatives offered by sports trainers and fitness coaches, highlighting the positive, long-term aspects, as well as the evolutionary and revolutionary steps taken towards the diversification of physical training programs in accordance to a large variety of the public. If ancient gymnastics involved only athletes, we currently observe a tendency to identify the movement needs of people according to age, ailments, the body's ability to withstand effort, etc. The modern trend is to design and customize training according to one's needs, and online training programs are well suited to successfully accomplish this mission. Therefore, we are going to prove the importance of online fitness apps for the continuing education of mind and body together with the perpetuating of Olympic education principles.

Keywords: Olympism, Motivation, Exercise, Fitness, Adulthood.

Citation: Braniște, G. (2023). From Ancient Gymnastics to Online Fitness Training - Evolution and Perspectives in Physical Training. In M. Koc, O. T. Ozturk & M. L. Ciddi (Eds.), *Proceedings of ICRES 2023--International Conference on Research in Education and Science* (pp. 737-745), Cappadocia, Turkiye. ISTES Organization.

Introduction

All the activities of the Olympic Movement have been aimed at promoting sport, culture and education to build a better world, taking their starting point and inspiration from the physical training practiced by ancient civilizations in the Middle East and Asia.

Since the earliest evidence of man's interest in training the body through disciplined exercise 7000 years ago, the spread of sport has been designed to cultivate the satisfaction found in effort, the educational value of good

example and respect for universal fundamental ethical principles, but never, until the coronavirus pandemic, did people feel so keenly the importance of movement and sport.

This study reviews the alternatives offered by sports coaches in general and fitness trainers in particular during the period of isolation and highlights the positive, long-term aspects as well as the evolutionary and revolutionary steps made towards diversifying physical activity training programs according to a wide variety of audiences. The modern trend is to design and customize training according to personal needs, and online training programs are well suited to successfully accomplish this mission. Therefore, we propose to demonstrate the importance of Olympism in the formation of motivations and physical culture of personality through traditional and online fitness applications aimed at continuous training of mental and psychomotor sphere of women and men of early adulthood in the conditions of modern society (Shephard, 2018).

According to several scholars (Sion, 2003; Schiopu & Verza, 1997; Trofala, 2007), the first period of adulthood is a whole string of maximum achievements of the human personality. This period of age (35-45 years) represents the period of highest productivity in work, because high yields are achieved with minimum energy consumption. This is because the stabilisation, harmonisation and psychological (of interests, skills, abilities, and the character traits involved in the work process) and social (of ways of interacting with others), which began in youth, take on a stable form in mature people (Schiopu & Verza, 1997). The main specific features of this age period are: professional activity - engagement in productive, valued and socially useful work; family relations - care for one's own children, extension of responsibilities for family life and concern for other members of society. Often at this age there is further training, retraining, a university degree or doctorate, etc. Social statuses and roles start to become more loaded with responsibilities (Mocanu et al., 2020; Sion, 2003; Verza, 2000).

Thus, the stabilization, harmonization and psychological (interests, skills, abilities, character traits implicit in the work process) and social (ways of interrelationship), begun in youth, take their stable forms in the mature man. In addition to these characteristics of psycho- and socio-behavioural normality, i.e. characteristics that individualise the maturity of the human personality, its psychophysical and psychosocial health and psychomotor training are a particularly important aspect of an integral and active personality, capable of successfully resolving the multiple objectives of everyday life.

Results and Discussion

Taking into account that the main factor contributing to the formation and maintenance of a higher level of psychophysical health, psychosocial adaptation and psychomotor training of the personality is physical exercise, we carried out a questionnaire on a sample of 202 women and 202 men aged 35-45 years. The purpose of conducting this questionnaire was to determine the importance and preferred forms of organising motor activities in the practice of daily life.

To the question "Do you know the importance and role of regular exercise on the human body?", the answers given by the respondents were evenly distributed among both women and men:

- 98% of respondents confirmed the value and role of exercise in maintaining the level of psychophysical health and psychomotor fitness needed for activities of daily living;
- and only 2% (4 people) mentioned "relatively" to this phenomenon.

At the same time, for the response variants that we proposed, i.e. these values of purposeful motor activity are of greatest importance for this age group of both male and female respondents, the responses were distributed in the following order (see Figure 1).

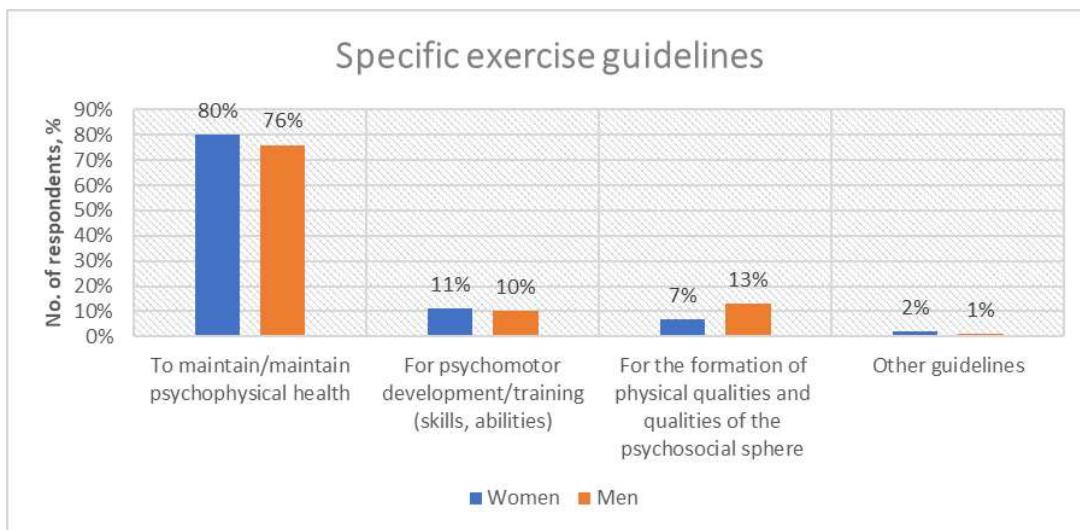


Figure 1. Respondents' views on the importance and role of systematic exercise on the body

The majority of respondents believe that exercise helps to increase, strengthen and maintain their psychophysical health (80% women and 76% men). Given the specificity of their bodies and psychology, the index is higher in women and this can be explained by the fact that women are more attentive to any changes, restructurings that occur in the process of maturity. While men consider health as a constant state of well-being and pay attention to it in problematic situations. Compared to women, men have a lower level of psychological personality anxiety.

Equally important for women and men, but much less so than in the previous indices, is the factor of "psychomotor training" in terms of the formation of motor skills and abilities. Note here the close homogeneity of the statistical indices for women and men (11% and 10% respectively). Such a low evaluation of this factor can be explained by the fact that, in general physical education practice, the knowledge aspects of motor skills and skills training are not adequately reflected and it is believed that once exercises are performed, they are formed in the same context through repeated practice.

At the same time, we can note the relatively low indicators of the factor of physical and psycho-social qualities (women 7%, men 13%), which can be explained from the point of view of this age group, where the main value orientation is to maintain the acquired physical condition. The higher rate of this factor in men (13%, almost 2 times) than in women can be explained by the following:

- the specific nature of male professions which place certain demands on the manifestation of personal psychophysical qualities (strength, stamina, speed, etc.);
- the specificity of strength training exercises, which are preferable for men in terms of building body culture.

Thus, we can note the heterogeneous distribution of respondents' opinions on the importance of equivalent factors due to a low level of information (knowledge) in the main categories of physical education. In this context, the determination of sources related to obtaining such information and knowledge is of particular interest.

In the context of classifying the sources of information that determined the importance of exercise for respondents, we proposed some response variants, which as a result were distributed differently between women and men in the following order (see Figure 2):

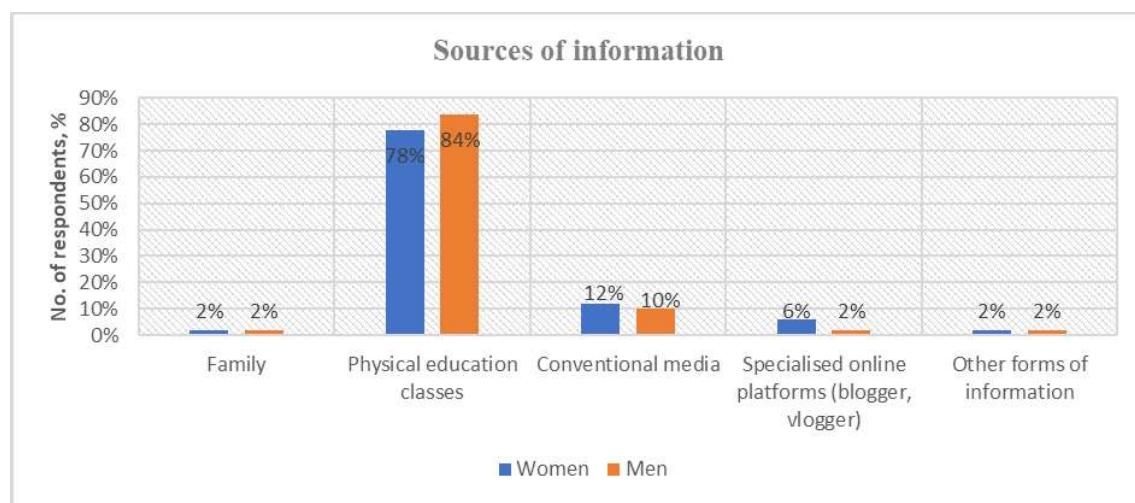


Figure 2. Sample responses on identifying sources of information that determined the importance of exercise

From what is illustrated in Figure 2, we observe that the basic and main source of determining the importance of physical exercise in a person's daily life for both groups of respondents is previous experience related to the educational content of the school subject "Physical Education" (females - 78%, males - 84%). A certain predominance of this factor in males can be explained by the fact that this subject is of greater interest to male schoolchildren at all stages of education.

In second place in terms of the importance of factors, we note "Media", which are roughly equally distributed between women and men - 12% and 10% respectively. This can be explained by the fact that in recent years the

media has paid more and more attention to educational programmes on the use of physical exercise with a focus on health and recreation.

The same unequivocal distribution can also be stated for the insignificant factors "Family" (2% each for both groups) and "Other forms of information" (2% each for both groups). The low indicator of the factor "Family", we believe, is due to the fact that the family relies almost entirely on school and does not pay enough attention to this sphere of education.

At the same time, the 2% indicator in the "Other sources of information" factor allows us to see that a fairly small number of people are looking for additional sources of information other than traditional ones. And as they see it, more rational and efficient.

Of particular interest, in terms of its non-homogeneous indicators, is the factor "Specialized online platforms" (6% of women and only 2% of men). Such a difference, we believe, can be explained by the fact that women are more attracted by the external attributes that accompany the process of exercise sessions (design, equipment, composition of participants, forms of rhythmic accompaniment, etc.).

At the same time, to the question "What are the major events and mainstream sports forums that support the attraction, value and motivation to exercise as part of a modern lifestyle?", the statistics of the female and male groups were almost evenly distributed across all response options in the proposed questionnaire (see Figure 3).

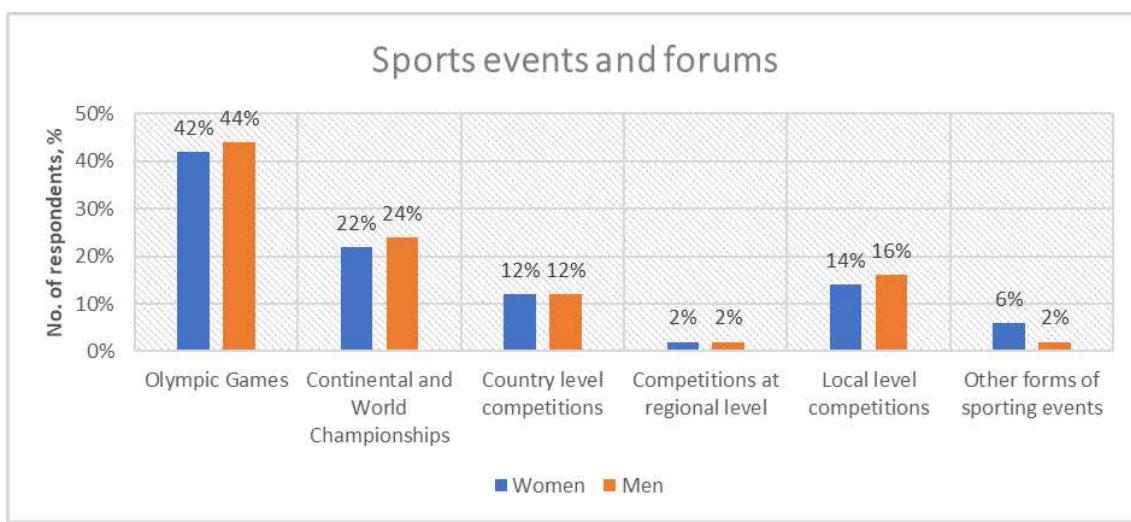


Figure 3. Respondents' answers on the source of motivation for exercising as a component of the modern way of life

The predominant majority of respondents (42% women and 44% men) mentioned the Olympic Games as the main factor supporting their motivation to practice general motor exercises and sports events through the cultural attractiveness of world events.

Also with relatively lower statistics are "Continental and World Championships" (22% women and 24% men)

and "Country Competitions" (12% each for women and men). The given statistics, in our opinion, can be explained by the fact that for this level of competitions programmes with a certain narrow diapason of sport specializations are characteristic, which limits the interest of the general public by the complex level of perception of professional procedures in competitions.

This opinion can also be confirmed by the statistical data resulting from the relatively high values for the impact of the factor "Local competitions" (14% for women and 16% for men), as this level of competitions is of particular interest given their involvement and the possibility of their direct participation in these events.

The low rating we mention in the factor "Competitions at regional level", which can be explained by their specialized character, unrated sports performances and their poor presentation in the media.

Thus, mass sports events, which are a main component of the Olympic Movement, are factors that update and stimulate the motivation to value and practice motor activities as an integral part of the active personality.

The majority of respondents, including 74% of women and 64% of men surveyed, say that specific exercise is an integral part of their daily regimen. In their opinion, for purposeful exercise, depending on the form of organisation and content of the sessions, 20 to 60 minutes are offered.

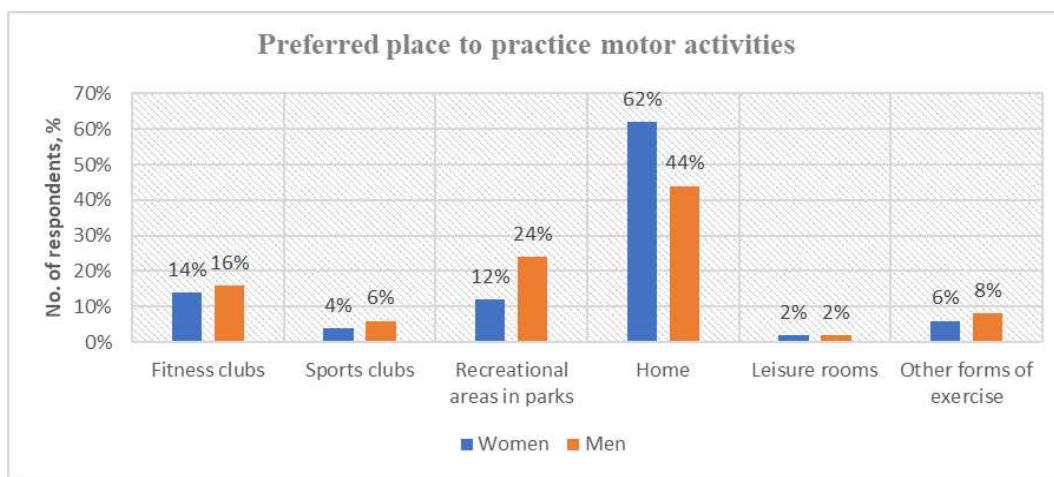


Figure 4. Respondents' answers on their preferred place to practice motor activity

According to the statistics of this survey (see Figure 4), home conditions are the most preferred form of organising physical exercise for both groups of respondents, where this index is much higher for women than for men (62% and 44%, respectively). This is explained by the fact that the very content of the sessions is a traditional complex of hygienic and maintenance gymnastics, which are performed at a convenient time and do not require special conditions and additional time for their execution. Also, a higher rate in women can be explained by the fact that women at this age prefer constancy of conditions, comfort, in any kind of activity. While men prefer variable conditions and exercises associated with large movements in space - running in the

background, overcoming various obstacles, etc., this may explain their higher indicator of the form of organisation "Leisure area in parks" (24% compared to 12% indicator in women).

It should be mentioned that in recent years, professionally organised sessions in fitness clubs have become increasingly popular among both men and women and are one of the main forms of exercise with various formative and developmental orientations, which is confirmed by the survey indicators, where such a form of motor activity is in third place, is used equally by women and men (14% and 16% respectively). Also noteworthy are independent, amateur forms of organised motor activity, significant in terms of their indicators (6% women and 8% men), which points to the need to study this experience in order to introduce it massively into the practice of physical culture for the adult population.

The results of the statistical data analysis of the questionnaire survey allow us to judge that among the different forms of exercise practice, the most practiced are with physical trainer (42% women, 38% men) and with online/mixed trainer (40% women, 38% men) (see Figure 5). Here we note the fact of close homogeneity of the indices in both groups of respondents, and the value of the rating of the form of organisation, in our opinion, is due to the specificity of the process as a professionally pedagogically organised activity under the leadership of the specialist in the field.

- individual (12% women, 22% men);
- other forms (4% women, 2% men).

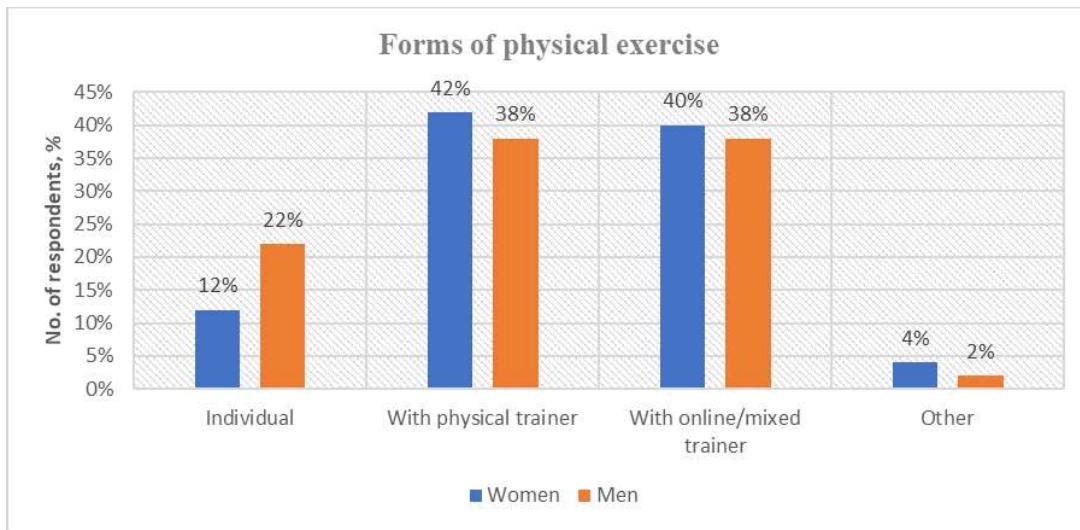


Figure 5. Respondents' answers on their preferred form of exercise

At the same time, the significant values of the "individual form" indicators allow us to see that this form is more preferential for men (22%) and less for women (12%), which can be explained by the greater inclination of women towards group communication.

In this socio-pedagogical study, we also established the main factors that motivate the need for systematic exercise (see Figure 6).

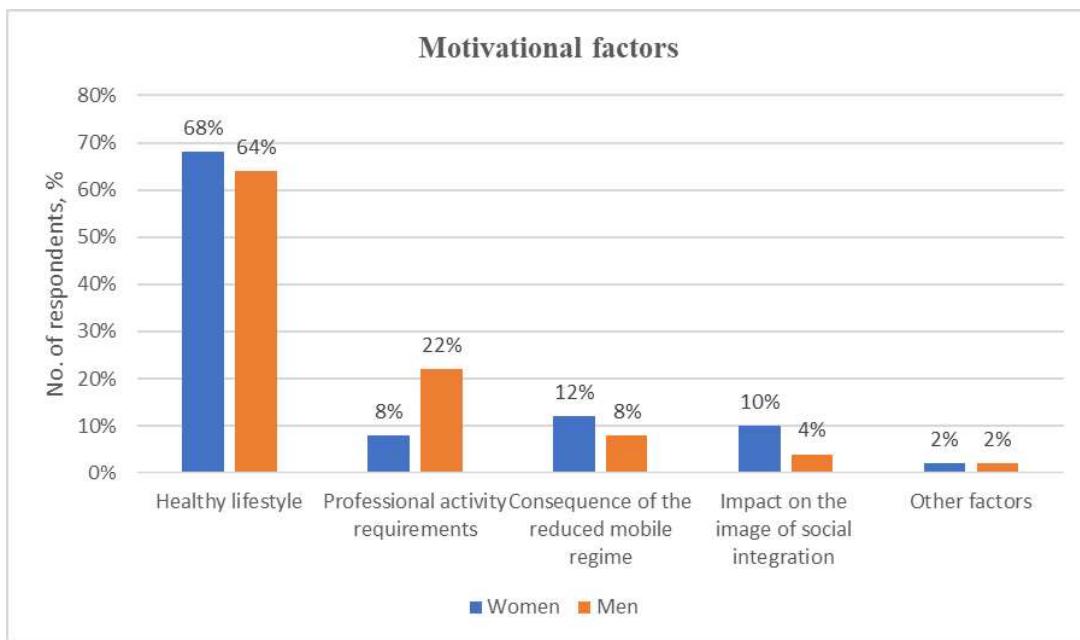


Figure 6. Sample responses on determining motivational factors for exercise

Analysing the data illustrated in Figure 6, we can mention that the main factor motivating respondents to exercise is the factor of a healthy lifestyle, as one of the most important conditions for maintaining health and achieving success in any kind of psycho-social and professional activity, which ensures a higher level of quality of life in an integral context. In this specific case we note the homogeneity of the value indices of the answers of the women's group with those of the men's group (68% and 64% respectively).

It is worth noting that for men, one of the most significant motivational factors listed is "Job requirements" (22%), while for women it ranks second to last (8%) of all options presented. This distribution can be explained by the fact that, in general, men work mostly in professional fields where their activities are associated with some physical effort, unlike women. For women, this position is confirmed by the second most important factor among those represented "Consequence of reduced mobility regime" (12%) and less significant at the same time for men (8%), which can be explained by the specificity of female professions that are not associated with intense physical effort and multiple movements.

It should also be noted that for women the factor "As impact on images of social integration" (10%) is at the same level, which can be explained by their desire to improve and maintain body harmony as a factor of social significance. While for men this option is one of the least significant (4%).

Thus, it can be stated that for men, of all the factors presented, only two of them are significant, while for women, the significance of all the factors is evenly distributed, which can be explained both by the specifics of the professions and by differences in the psychosocial status of women and men.

Conclusions

- The phenomenon of Olympism is one of the most important factors that actualize and stimulate the motivation to value and practice motor activities as an integral part of the active personality;
- The main sources of information that have determined the importance of physical exercise for the formation of physical culture of personality and healthy lifestyle in adults are the educational content of the subject "Physical Education" and conventional mass media;
- The main forms of organised motor activities in the early adult population are fitness clubs and "at home", practiced under the guidance of the physical trainer and the online/mixed trainer in order to maintain a healthy lifestyle, general work capacity and eliminate the consequences of a reduced dynamic regime.

References

Mocanu, V., Tarnovschi, F., Dolinschi, C. (2020). *Psychology of the ages*: course support for students: (Cycle I, undergraduate, for other degree programs) / State University of Moldova, Faculty of Psychology, Educational Sciences, Sociology and Social Work Department of Psychology. Chisinau: CEP USM, 159 p.

Sion, G. (2003). *The psychology of ages*. Bucharest: Ed. Romania of Tomorrow Foundation.

Shephard, R.J. (2018). *A history of health & fitness: Implications for policy today*. Springer International Publishing.

Schiopu, U., Verza, E. (1997). *Psychology of ages, life cycles*. Bucharest: Didactic and Pedagogical Publishing House.

Trofaila, L. (2007). *Developmental psychology*: Course support. Chisinau: UST.

Verza, E. (2000). *Psychology of the ages*. Bucharest: Pro Humanitate, 307 p.